DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 472 646 EA 032 302

AUTHOR	Larson, Kirstin
TITLE	Business Partnerships with Schools: Policy Guidelines for Schools Seeking To Establish and Maintain Productive and Ethical Relationships with Corporations.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, Eugene, OR.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2001-00-00
NOTE	18p.; Theme issue. Published annually.
AVAILABLE FROM	ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, 5207 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-5207. Tel: 541-346-2332; Tel: 800-438-8841 (Toll Free); Fax: 541-346-2334; Web site: http://eric.uoregon.edu. For full text: http://eric.uoregon.edu/ pdf/policy_reports/PR%20Business%20Relationships.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Non-Classroom (055) -- ERIC Publications (071)
JOURNAL CIT	Policy Report; n2 Fall 2001
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Advertising; *Corporate Support; Elementary Secondary Education; Ethics; *Policy; *School Business Relationship; School Support

ABSTRACT

This report focuses on business partnerships with schools. Supporters of school-business partnerships point out many potential benefits to schools, students, businesses, employees, and the community at large, while critics warn against the harmful effects of what they term "schoolhouse commercialism." Topics addressed include corporate sponsorships, school-to-career activities, corporate involvement with technology use in the classroom, protection of students' privacy, commercialism on the Internet used in the classroom, ethics of commercial activities in schools, and partnership building. Sidebars augment the text with salient examples regarding market research and federal policy on the protection of human subjects, Milwaukee's education policies on school-business relationships, federal laws protecting student privacy, and policy guidelines for technology use in the classroom. To augment public funding for public education, educators are "selling" commercial access to their students. As businesses develop new strategies of gaining access to schools, schools need very clear district policies that address the legal and ethical complexities of school-business relationships. (Contains 28 references.) (RT)

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Business Partnerships with Schools: Policy Guidelines for Schools Seeking to Establish and Maintain Productive and Ethical Relationships with Corporations. Policy Report.

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POLICY REPORT

Number 2 REPORTING ON POLICY ISSUES IN K-12 EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT Fall 2001

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Business Partnerships with Schools

Policy Guidelines for Schools Seeking to Establish and Maintain Productive and Ethical Relationships with Corporations

Over the last two decades, the business community has significantly expanded its involvement in public schools. From "adopt-a-school" programs and school-to-career partnerships to lobbying for national education reforms, business leaders are taking on an increasing share of the responsibility to educate America's youth.

"Education in general, and public education specifically, is the cornerstone of our culture and an absolute necessity for economic prosperity."

-Marianne Becton
Verizon

"Education in general, and public education specifically, is the cornerstone of our culture and an absolute necessity for economic prosperity," observes Marianne Becton, Verizon Washington's manager of External Affairs and cochair of the Washington, D.C., STC Local Partnership Council (Becton and Sammon 2001). Like many business leaders committed to helping schools improve, Becton views education as "key to successfully preparing youth for careers in the 21st century."

Some businesses, in turn, view educating youth as a responsibility to be shared by corporate citizens. Becton and Sammon write that Verizon's "commitment to education is driven by its responsibility as a good corporate citizen and by the understanding that today's students will be tomorrow's employees, consumers, regulators, and neighbors." The authors also invoke the notion of *returnship* that guides the partnerships of Integris

Topics addressed:

- Corporate sponsorships
- School-to-career activities
- Corporate involvement with technology use in the classroom
- Protection of students' privacy
- Commercialism on the Internet used in the classroom
- Ethics of commercial activities in schools
- Partnership building

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Policy Report

Number 2. Fall 2001

Reporting on Policy Issues in K-12 Educational Management

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Health, a not-for-profit health-care system. According to the Integris Health's mission statement, "returnship is giving back to the community in financial, emotional, physical, and spiritual ways a portion of what we have received" (quoted in Becton and Sammon).

Many local firms and national corporations seem to be motivated by a sincere desire to serve their communities by investing funds and other resources in schools.

Some other business leaders view their involvement in education primarily as a way to conduct market research and advertise in schools. One marketing guide suggests that companies can use schools to get "kids' opinions on anything from their favorite color to their favorite TV personality to what kind of texture their breakfast cereal should have—during school hours" (Phillips Business Information, Inc. 2000). A 21-page guide shows companies how to work through the appropriate channels to get inside schools and "inside kids' heads":

> Behind the walls of elementary, intermediate and high schools across the country, a generation of kids is making short- and long-term consumer choices based on the influences they receive during the school day. What clothes to buy, what soda to drink, what Web sites to surf are all decisions that are based heavily on the messages they hear in school—from friends, teachers and smart marketers.
>
> But how do you get your message into the schools, especially in an era where front-page school violence has made parents, teachers and administrators more wary of outsiders than ever? And how do you craft your message to gain the acceptance of an exceedingly marketing-savvy group?
>
> These questions and more are tackled in the pages of "In-School Marketing: Capturing K-12 Mindshare," a guide to working through the appropriate school channels to get inside. (Phillips Business Information, Inc.)

The guide includes chapters titled "In-School Marketing: from the Boardroom to Homeroom," "The Way to a Kid's Heart Is Through His Stomach," "Branding in the Classroom: Cable Networks Strike Balance," "Curriculum-Hungry Teachers Love Free, Branded Materials," "How Uniforms Could Rock Your World," "Why Uniforms Fit Kids' Brains," and "Don't Show Me the Money: Companies Realize Benefits of Community Relations."

Not all businesses, however, approach schools with such a blatant profit motive. Many local firms and national corporations seem to be motivated by a sincere desire to serve their communities by investing funds and other resources in schools.

The reasons businesses interact with public schools appear to be as diverse and complex as the forms these interactions take. "Commercial activities in schools run the gamut from noncontroversial approaches, such as grants and gifts, to highly controversial activities, such as market research," states the U.S. General Accounting Office (Shaul 2000).

Other business leaders view their involvement in education primarily as a way to conduct market research and advertise in schools.

The two most common types of relationships between schools and businesses are *school-reform advocacy* and *school-business partnerships* (for example, school-to-career programs and corporate sponsorship). These two categories often overlap, since school-business partnerships are components of many corporate school-reform efforts, and many corporate advocates of school reform assume partnership roles with school administrators and teachers to implement reforms. Nevertheless, school-business partnerships and business-led school reform are two distinct forms of engagement, with a dis-

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tinguishable cluster of goals, outcomes, and ethical implications.

("Corporate Involvement in School Reform" is the subject of a companion *Policy Brief* that will be available from the Clearinghouse in Winter 2002.)

The growth of business involvement in schools has sparked an equally complex cluster of ethical and legal concerns on the part of educators, administrators, parents, and policy-makers. Many education organizations have responded to the increased corporate involvement in schools with guiding principles, resolutions, and legislative initiatives.

As early as 1990, delegates to the National PTA convention adopted a resolution that warned against "any business exerting so much power to influence the curriculum." The resolution expressed concern "about the dangers to children and the implications of any business exerting so much power to influence the curriculum of the schools of this country and the opinions of so many students" (National PTA 1997).

Many education policies now condemn certain types of school-business relationships as "exploitation and a violation of public trust" (Center for the Analysis of Commercialism in Education 1999). Educators and policy-makers are especially critical of corporate sponsors who use their access to a captive audience of students for commercial purposes, and of schools that sell or provide access to students or to publicly funded property and publicly funded time.

This report on school-business partnerships addresses a range of ethical concerns educators have raised concerning these relationships. The section on school-business partnerships highlights recent education policies, federal laws, and practical guidelines for relationships between schools and businesses. Special attention is given to legal and ethical guidelines for partnerships with businesses that offer technology resources to students.

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Market Research and Federal Policy on the Protection of Human Subjects

Although the U.S. General Accounting Office found no school-board policies that specifically addressed market-research activities, researchers did find that some districts had more general policies, such as a requirement that the superintendent approve student surveys and questionnaires. Willard (2000) suggests that educators can use federal law for the protection of human subjects of academic research as a benchmark:

Federal Policy on the Protection of Human Subjects. Federal law for the protection of human subjects in the context of academic research can provide schools with guidance on standards that are considered necessary to protect the welfare of research subjects. These rules can provide a benchmark for determining protections that are necessary for the welfare of research subjects, especially children. They require that:

Academic researchers seeking to gather data from students must demonstrate that their research will have a social benefit.

Researchers must provide a detailed human subjects protocol that addresses issues of privacy and confidentiality, potential risks to the subjects, and how those risks will be mitigated. The human subjects protocol must be approved by the research institution's Institutional Review Board and then by the individual school district prior to any collection of data from students.

Researchers must prepare an informed consent document for parents and older children which outlines the socially beneficial purpose of the research and the provisions for the protection of the child. Both the parent and the child must sign the informed consent document.

Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, does not require a full human subjects protocol or an informed consent document.

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Education Policies on School-Business Relationships

Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in Schools

To help schools, administrators, and teachers meet their ethical obligations to students when partnering with companies that provide educational resources, the following principles have been adopted by the National Association of State Boards of Education, National Parent-Teachers Association (PTA), American Association of School Administrators, National Council of Social Studies, and the National Education Association:

School-business relationships based on sound principles can contribute to high quality education. However, compulsory attendance confers on educators an obligation to protect the welfare of their students and the integrity of the learning environment. Therefore, when working together schools and businesses must ensure that educational values are not distorted in the process. Positive school-business relationships should be ethical and structured in accordance with all eight of the following principles:

1. Corporate involvement shall not require students to observe, listen to, or read commercial advertising.
2. Selling or providing access to a captive audience in the classroom for commercial purposes is exploitation and a violation of the public trust.
3. Since school property and time are publicly funded, selling or providing free access to advertising on school property outside the classroom involves ethical and legal issues that must be addressed.
4. Corporate involvement must support the goals and objectives of the schools. Curriculum and instruction are within the purview of educators.
5. Programs of corporate involvement must be structured to meet an identified education need, not a commercial motive, and must be evaluated for educational effectiveness by the school/district on an ongoing basis.
6. Schools and educators should hold sponsored and donated materials to the same standards used for the selection and purchase of curriculum materials.
7. Corporate involvement programs should not limit the discretion of schools and teachers in the use of sponsored materials.
8. Sponsor recognition and corporate logos should be for identification rather than commercial purposes. (Center for Analysis of Commercialism in Education 1999)

The Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in Schools were developed at a meeting proposed by Molnar and hosted by the School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1990. These principles have been adopted by the National Association of State Boards of Education, National Parent-Teachers Association (PTA), American Association of School Administrators, National Council of Social Studies. They also have been endorsed by state superintendents of education in California, Georgia, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina (CACE 1999).

National PTA Guidelines for Corporate Involvement in Schools. According to the National PTA, these guidelines are intended to assist parents, schools, PTAs, and businesses in using the organization's National Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools:

- Parents need to be involved as equal partners when schools engage in decisions regarding business (corporate partnerships).
- Everyone involved in a school-business partnership should be reminded that the adequacy of public school facilities, supplies, and programs is the responsibility of all taxpayers, and the appropriate public officials must remain responsible for providing each and every student with the resources necessary for a quality education. The adequacy of the public school program should not depend on marketing decisions made by private corporations.
- It is important to consider the overall character and effect of a school-business partnership to determine if the corporate involvement is in keeping with a noncommercial environment in the classroom and school building. Public schools must not be used to promote commercial interest.
- School districts could establish a Business Advisory Council that includes PTA parent/student members to help involve businesses in the schools, give directions to businesses on school needs, provide information about the schools to business leaders, and help school leaders understand the concerns of businesses regarding schools. (National PTA)

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School-Business Partnerships

The millennium brings with it increasing demands on schools to do more to prepare students for the world of work and for educational experiences beyond high school. As educators, we must accept that we can no longer work in isolation to help our students meet the challenges they face.... [T]hose of us who are principals know, perhaps better than anyone else, that we are being asked to accomplish more with limited and, in some cases, no resources. If we do not turn to our communities to help, we will fall short of our goals. (Mildred Musgrove, principal, Anacostia Senior High School, Washington, D.C., quoted in Becton and Sammon)

Supporters of school-business partnerships point out many potential benefits to schools, students, businesses, employees, and the community at large, while critics warn against the harmful effects of what they term "schoolhouse commercialism."

Faced with limited resources and increasing demands to improve students' academic performance, a growing number of public schools are turning to businesses for resources that range from cash and computers to educational materials and career mentorships. In exchange, businesses receive benefits ranging from exclusive vending rights and advertising space in school hallways to better prospects for a technically skilled labor pool. Commonly referred to as "partnerships," these myriad exchanges between schools and businesses are presumably voluntary and mutually beneficial.

"Schools in the 21st century will be driven, in large part, by partnerships," write Becton and Sammon. Evidence suggests that school-business partnerships are indeed becoming a standard fixture in America's schools. As of 1992, "over 200,000 businesses in the U.S. had partnerships with over 40,000 elementary and secondary schools" (Mickelson 1999).

Since then, corporate involvement in schools appears to have expanded at a phenomenal rate. According to two recent studies, press citations reporting on commercial activities in schools appear to have increased 154 percent between 1990 and 1997 (Molnar 1998) and jumped 303 percent between 1990 and 1999 (Molnar, September 1999).

The proliferation of commercial activity in schools is accompanied by increasing concerns on the part of educators and policymakers. The U.S. General Accounting Office states:

> Commercial activities in U.S. public elementary and secondary schools have been growing in visibility throughout the last decade, a period characterized by tightened school budgets. As visibility has increased, so have concerns about commercial activities that generate cash, equipment, or other types of assistance and their potential effects on students' learning and purchasing behavior.

Supporters of school-business partnerships point out many potential benefits to schools, students, businesses, employees, and the community at large, while critics warn against the harmful effects of what they term "schoolhouse commercialism." Others call for ethical guidelines and a stricter definition of educational partnerships. Recent education policy and federal law also directly address the business presence in schools.

Types of Partnerships

Although school-business partnerships vary widely, the two most common types are: (1) *school-to-career activities* (also known as "career awareness programs"), and (2) *corporate sponsorship* programs (also known as "adopt-a-school" programs). These two types of partnerships are described here in terms of benefits offered to students and the role in which students tend to be cast by the terms of the partnership (for example, as consumers or as future workers).

In light of the vast number and scope of arrangements that are termed "school-business partnerships," the categories below are flexible. In some school-business partnerships, students might be approached primarily as learners rather than as consumers or

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future workers. In other cases, it might be difficult to distinguish between a career-awareness activity and a corporate sponsorship. The categories below might best be viewed as extreme ends of a spectrum, ranging from (1) school-to-career activities to corporate sponsorship, (2) "students as learners" to "students as consumers," and (3) "students as learners" to "students as future workers."

The degree to which any given corporate sponsorship engages students as learners depends on whether any advertising is involved; the amount, type, and intended audience of the advertising; and the degree to which the sponsorship has a direct educational benefit to students (for example, the quality and impact of educational materials or activities provided to students).

Likewise, the degree to which any given school-to-career partnership engages students as academic learners depends on the extent to which the skills and experiences offered to students have educational value beyond their applicability in the workplace. Do the programs, for example, foster critical-thinking skills, problem-solving skills, self-expression, civic awareness, reading comprehension, knowledge of history and science, competency in math, or an appreciation for the arts?

Ultimately, of course, the educational outcome and manner in which students are approached depend on the educational vision of the schools and businesses involved, and the specific terms negotiated between them.

School-to-Career Activities (Students as Future Workers)

> Educational partnerships are essential for career awareness, exploration and development. Successful partnerships provide mutual benefits which are designed to improve the quality of education of all students. (Baltimore County Career Connections [Online], no date)

Career-oriented partnerships between businesses and schools share many common features. This particular model is adapted mainly from the Baltimore County Career Connections (BCCC) Web page, "Mutual Benefits for Schools and Businesses." According to this model, businesses partner with high schools and other "institutions in the supplier chain... to develop

Federal Laws Protecting Student Privacy

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1999

When partnering with companies that provide online resources to students, schools must understand how they might be affected by the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA).

> COPPA, effective April 21, 2000, applies to the online collection of personal information by commercial web sites from children under 13 years of age. The new rules spell out what a web site operator must include in a privacy policy, when and how to seek verifiable consent from a parent, and what responsibilities an operator has to protect children's privacy and safety online. COPPA applies to individually identifiable information about a child that is collected online, such as full name, home address, email address, telephone number, or any other information that would allow someone to identify or contact the child. COPPA also covers other types of information—for example, hobbies, interests and information collected through cookies or other types of tracking mechanisms—when they are tied to individually identifiable information. (Willard 2000)

Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA)

Designed primarily to protect the privacy of students' educational records, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) also regulates "directory-type information" about students. FERPA allows directory information to be disclosed without parental consent, but requires schools to notify parents about such disclosures and give them "reasonable time" to request that such information be withheld. A clear summary is provided in the "FERPA Fact Sheet," published by the U.S. Department of Education's Family Compliance Office:

> Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. Schools must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letter, inclusion in a PTA bulletin, student handbook, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school. (U.S. Department of Education Family Policy Compliance Office 2000)

Willard writes:

> In accord with the spirit—but not the actual language—of FERPA, schools should also provide disclosure and obtain parental consent before allowing or encouraging students to provide personally identifiable information on a web site while at school. (Willard 2000)

The actual language of FERPA concerning directory information is as follows:

> *§ 99.3 What definitions apply to these regulations?*
>
> "Directory information" means information contained in an education record of a student which would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. It includes, but is not limited to the student's name, address, telephone listing, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, degrees and awards received, and the most recent previous educational agency or institution attended. (Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1232g(a)(5)(A)) (34 CFR Part 99, 99.3)

§ 99.37 What conditions apply to disclosing directory information?

(a) An educational agency or institution may disclose directory information if it has given public notice to parents of students in attendance and eligible students in attendance at the agency or institution of:

(1) The types of personally identifiable information that the agency or institution has designated as directory information;

(2) A parent's or eligible student's right to refuse to let the agency or institution designate any or all of those types of information about the student as directory information; and

(3) The period of time within which a parent or eligible student has to notify the agency or institution in writing that he or she does not want any or all of those types of information about the student designated as directory information.

(b) An educational agency or institution may disclose directory information about former students without meeting the conditions in paragraph (a) of this section. (Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1232g(a)(5)(A) and (B)) (34 CFR Part 99, 99.37)

SB 290: Student Privacy Protection Act

Introduced by Senators Dodd and Shelby, the Student Privacy Protection Act would require schools to obtain parental consent before allowing commercial companies to collect market-research data from students. Willard recommends that this legislation require schools to give full and adequate notice to parents, and eliminate the element of coercion:

> If parents are being placed in a position of being required to provide consent to the profiling and targeting of advertisements to their child as a condition of their child's participation in an activity that is an important component of their education, there is no choice. This is coercion. (Willard 2001)

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both industry and company specific classroom and workplace learning services." As part of a "business-need-driven, systematic approach to transitioning students from school to careers," businesses:

- Hold career fairs
- Offer paid work experience, apprenticeships, and internships
- Conduct mock interviews
- Provide opportunities for employees to mentor students and serve as consultants to student-run businesses
- Provide internships and job-shadowing opportunities for students and teachers
- Work with teachers to develop lessons that integrate academic and workplace knowledge
- Offer training workshops for students and teachers (Becton and Sammon)

Ideally, students:

- Are introduced to a range of career choices
- Gain a realistic understanding of the workplace
- Learn about the skills and training their career aspirations require
- Apply the knowledge they've acquired in the classroom
- Become more motivated to learn after seeing "real-life" applications of their academic knowledge
- Come away "with the sense that there are caring adults throughout the community who want to see them succeed" (Musgrove, quoted in Becton and Sammon)
- Are less likely to drop out of school
- Learn from a variety of positive role models

In exchange, businesses:

- Cultivate a reliable source of better-trained, better-motivated employees
- Help attract more business to the area through a well-trained work force
- Enjoy a more influential business community and a broader tax base
- Improve employee morale ("Employers are frequently surprised by the positive effects of working with young people on morale and supervisory skills" [Kazis 1999].)
- Publicize their involvement and volunteerism within the school system
- Give items to students with their logo displayed
- Can dissolve the partnership at any time, for any reason (Adapted from BCCC unless otherwise indicated)

Corporate Sponsorship (Students as Consumers)

Corporate sponsors typically provide schools with money, goods, or services in exchange for the opportunity to advertise or sell products to students. The term *corporate sponsorship* is therefore used here interchangeably with *commercial activities in schools*.

Corporate sponsorship simply emphasizes the relationship between schools and the businesses that engage in commercial activities at those schools. (The term also allows for cases in which corporations might sponsor, or literally support, schools without engaging in commercial activity at those schools. Such sponsors might then be approaching students less as consumers than as learners.)

School-to-career partnerships can also include commercial activities (for example, displaying a company logo on sponsored educational materials). However, the premise of these partnerships is mainly to provide career guidance and preparation in exchange for a well-trained work force, rather than to provide resources in exchange for the opportunity to advertise and sell products to students.

Alex Molnar (1998), director of the Center for the Analysis of Commercialism in Education at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, identifies seven categories of commercial activities in schools:

Sponsorship of Programs and Activities: Corporations paying for or subsidizing school events and/or one-time activities in return for the right to associate their name with the events and activities. This may also include school contests.

Exclusive Agreements: Agreements between schools and corporations that give corporations the exclusive right to sell and promote their goods and/or services in the school or school district. In return, the district or school receives a percentage of the profits derived from the arrangement. Exclusive agreements may also entail granting a corporation the right to be the sole supplier of a product or service and thus associate its products with activities such as high school basketball programs.

Incentive Programs: Corporate programs that provide money, goods, or services to a school or school district when its students, parents, or staff

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engage in a specified activity, such as collecting particular product labels or cash-register receipts from particular stores.

Appropriation of Space: The allocation of school space, such as scoreboards, rooftops, bulletin boards, walls, and textbooks on which corporations may place corporate logos and/or advertising messages.

Sponsored Educational Materials: Materials supplied by corporations and/or trade associations that claim to have an instructional content.

Electronic Marketing: The provision of electronic programming and/or equipment in return for the right to advertise to students and/or their families and community members in school or when they contact the school or district.

Privatization: Management of schools or school programs by private, for-profit corporations or other nonpublic entities. (Molnar 1998)

The U.S. General Accounting Office (Shaul) presents four broad categories of commercial activities in schools, including market research.

- **Products Sales** (for example, exclusive contracts, short-term fund-raising sales)
- **Direct Advertising** (for example, advertisements in school corridors or on school buildings)
- **Indirect Advertising** (for example, corporate-sponsored educational materials or teacher training)
- **Market Research** (for example, taste tests, focus groups, surveys, Internet panels) (Adapted from Shaul)

Researchers found that the most common and lucrative type of commercial activities at the schools they visited were soft-drink sales, which took the form of exclusive vending contracts and short-term fundraising sales (Shaul). Researchers also observed many instances of direct advertising, while the presence of indirect advertising was usually limited and subtle (Shaul).

Although none of the schools that researchers visited reported engaging students in market research, the report notes that market research in schools is a growing phenomenon (Shaul).

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Guidelines for School-Business Partnerships

The U.S. General Accounting Office reports that state laws governing commercial activities in schools vary widely (Shaul).

> Nationwide, only general laws and regulations that apply to all businesses or that govern school finance usually cover school-based commercial activities. However, 19 states currently have statutes or regulations that address school-related commercial activities, but in 14 of these states, statutes and regulations are not comprehensive and permit or restrict only specific types of activities. (Shaul)

The GAO found that "in most cases, local school officials are responsible for making decisions about commercial activities." As a result, the level of commercial activities in schools varies among and even within districts: "Because most of the decisions are made at the local level, different preferences of local officials will result in different levels of commercial activities across districts and across schools in the same district" (Shaul).

Although it is not practically possible to construct a single, comprehensive set of recommendations addressing the many facets of business involvement in schools, the following sections highlight recent education policies, federal laws, and practical guidelines concerning school-business relationships.

The guidelines are drawn from a variety of sources. They include the meaning and scope of educational partnerships, education policies on corporate involvement in schools, procedures for cultivating successful partnerships, and recommended principles for the use of technology in the classroom.

A Policy Decision: What Kind of Partnership Do We Want?

Schools that decide to form partnerships with businesses are advised to identify the specific educational goal to be achieved by the partnership, involve parents and the larger community in the decision, and design a district policy in advance that addresses the ethical and legal issues of school-business relationships.

Once the partnership is under way, schools are also advised to evaluate the partnership on a regular basis.

Educational partnerships vs. business deals. As schools in Canada turn to partnerships with businesses, they are grappling with problems similar to their U.S. counterparts. In a recent analysis of school-business partnerships in Canada's Rocky View School Division (RVSD), Gladstone and Jacobsen (1999) say that "educators have to clearly define for stakeholders what constitutes an educational partnership, and what is a business deal." They cite a recent report showing that "an overwhelming majority of Canadians support the idea of schools forming more links with business, but many are wary of advertising in the classroom" (Gladstone and Jacobsen).

To address this dilemma, Gladstone and Jacobsen suggest that educators need to distinguish between educational partnerships and business deals: "The bottom line," they say, is that "if there is no direct educational benefit to children, then the relationship is not an educational partnership."

Advertising on school buses in exchange for funding, for example, offers

no direct educational benefit to children; such an exchange would therefore be a business deal rather than an educational partnership. As Gladstone and Jacobsen put it: "In order for educational partnerships to contribute to a valuable and legitimate educational experience for our children, there has to be a direct and measurable impact on learning."

Educational partnerships as working relationships. Becton and Sammon likewise distinguish educational partnerships from money-centered business deals, stressing that "partnership is not about money." "[W]e all realize that money alone will not cure today's educational problems." They go even further, and bring the relationship model into school-business partnerships: like any relationship, partnership "takes time, clear communication, flexibility, and constant attention." Moreover, the successful partnership is no longer about "occasional forays into schools for special programs and activities"; rather, successful partnerships call for long-term commitment and are "more about shared responsibility than corporate donations" (Becton and Sammon).

While encouraging their business peers to become more involved in schools, Becton and Sammon advise businesses "to foster the values that make a commitment to the lives of our youth." They envision partnerships as working relationships between businesses and schools, based on a shared sense of responsibility to improve the quality of students' lives:

> The contributions of educators and business and community leaders have evolved from paternalistic "adopt us/help be the parent" attitudes to full working agreements by which principals and business and community organizations have learned new ways of working together, developing a vision and sharing responsibility for student growth and development.

Long-term, committed partnerships based on shared responsibility "include training students, as well as administrators, and involve employees at all levels, not just executives," write Becton and Sammon.

Once a partnership is under way, schools are also advised to evaluate the partnership on a regular basis. Schools that formulate policies in advance are better equipped to decide the terms of their partnerships with businesses, and to form positive educational partnerships that approach students as learners and as citizens.

> Drawing the line between the public and private interest *before* the first marketer targets your school or district, and involving your community in this important discussion, can prevent community dissension, parental protest, and possible litigation *after* the fact. (Fege and Hagelshaw 2000)

Practical Guidelines for Successful Partnerships

"Successful partnerships between schools and community organizations require time to get to know one another, their needs, and their resources," contend Becton and Sammon. They identify three key steps to building partnerships, what schools can ask their partners for, and practical guidelines for creating and sustaining successful partnerships:

Three key ingredients to partnership building:

- Identify what you need to accomplish. Set a goal. If it's unclear why you are establishing the partnership, it's going to be impossible to find common ground on which to build.
- Identify the knowledge, the skills, and the abilities you need to accomplish the task and then set out to build your team. The team need not be limited to the school community. Businesses, nonprofit organizations, postsecondary schools, unions, professional associations, government agencies, parents and parents' groups, and alumni are all resources.
- Know that you do not have to forge partnerships on your own. Become familiar with those who are responsible for creating and sustaining community partnerships for your school district. There will certainly be a central office staff person designated for that responsibility. However, an intermediary organization, such as the local chamber of commerce, may have assumed responsibility for building bridges between community groups and educators.

What can schools ask their partners for?

- In-school lectures; work-based experiences, such as job shadowing and internships, mentors and role models for students
- Work-based experiences and mentors for teachers
- Help setting goals, integrating curriculum, and developing strategic plans
- Assistance in meeting student needs outside of the classroom—for example, grief counseling, personal development, work-appropriate clothing, and housing
- Help securing equipment, resources, and funds (money should be the last thing educators look to their partners for)
- Help with recognizing partners, parents, and colleagues and awarding merit-based scholarships
- Team training—partners can help focus and lead workshops for teachers and student leaders.

Links to Other Guidelines

The Center for the Analysis of Commercialism in Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee provides links to several education and industry organizations offering "guidelines for the use of corporate-sponsored materials in schools and for promotion of appropriate relationships between business and public education." These links can be viewed at ***http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CACEguidelines.html***

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- Identification of research trends and statistical and anecdotal evaluations
- Paid and nonpaid job experiences for students

Guidelines for Establishing Partnerships

- Assess the current partnerships for your school and build a computer database of your existing resources. Track the number and types of partnership contacts and opportunities you generate in a year.
- Designate one person in your school to work with business partners. Make sure he or she has the requisite skills and the necessary time and the support for phone calls, meetings, and correspondence. A single point of contact will make it easier for everyone to know who is coordinating activities, resources, and needs.
- Identify an "in" when approaching a potential partner—for example, a parent who works in the company, an alumni link, or a name from a newspaper article. If you cannot find such a connection, contact the company's community relations office or personnel office.
- Establish true partnerships by taking the time to learn about your partners' needs and interests and communicate your own. Then develop a common vision and shared responsibility for teaching students effectively.
- Take time to develop a team attitude and build understanding of the two very different cultures in school and work environments. [Educators must understand the time-sensitivity, value-added, and financial concerns of business and community organizations. These organizations must be aware of the demands of working in frequently under-equipped buildings with, perhaps, several thousand young people and hundreds of adults, all of whom have rigid schedules.]
- Constantly evaluate and assess your partnership.
- Be flexible; make adjustments when necessary.
- Communicate clearly and honestly about challenges, pitfalls, problems, and successes.
- Say thank you often and in a variety of ways. (Becton and Sammon)

Alternatives to Corporate Sponsorship

Corporate sponsorship provides resources that are just a drop in the bucket compared to the overall funding and actual needs of public education, yet the price of sponsorship may include a compromised learning environment, parental and community protest, and litigation (Fege and Hagelshaw 2000).

Corporate sponsorship can also backfire, say its critics, when the public underestimates the needs of schools that have turned to corporate sponsors (Hagelshaw, in Merrow 1999). After seeing corporate-sponsored "extras" like a new athletic facility, taxpayers may decide not to vote for funds that are required to meet the basic needs of a school (Hagelshaw, in Merrow).

Communities can also become accustomed to the private funding of their schools, making fundraising in the public sphere more difficult in the future. The more "schools resort to private enterprise as a source of funding for public education, the less the school board, state legislature, and Congress feel obligated to allocate from the public purse," say Fege and Hagelshaw.

As for schools that still need additional funds, Fege and Hagelshaw note that there are many untapped foundations and organizations that do not require "the commercial quid pro quo." Stephens, Karnes, and Samel (2000) suggest that schools in search of supplemental funding "should consider fund development, an approach long practiced by colleges and universities... but seldom attempted by elementary and middle schools."

In "A Principal's Guide to Fundraising," Stephens, Karnes, and Samel explain planned giving, grants, and creative fundraising, and highlight resources that can help principals locate federal and philanthropic funding sources.

Policy Guidelines for Technology Use in the Classroom

When schools form relationships with businesses that provide online educational materials and activities, commercial activities such as targeted marketing, online profiling, and online market-research surveys may be introduced more subtly into the classroom. To help educators forge ethical partnerships with providers of online educational materials and activities, Willard (2001) proposes a sample district policy:

District Policy

Selling or providing access through the district's Internet system to a captive student audience for the purpose of commercial market research or commercial advertising is exploitation and a violation of public trust. Neither the district, a school, nor a district educator may enter into an agreement with or utilize the services of a third party Internet service that would:

a. Require or encourage the establishment of individual student accounts on the third party Internet service, either using actual student names or user names (pseudonyms), if the third party Internet service intends to collect, analyze, and/or use information about students for the purpose of directing advertising or commercial sponsorship information to students.

b. Allow the collection, analysis, and/or sale of individual or anonymous student use data for the purpose of commercial advertising and marketing research activities.

c. Require that students view banner advertisements for consumer items while engaged in learning activities through the third party system, unless there is an educational reason that would warrant allowing the viewing of such advertisements.

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d. Require that students participate in Internet learning activities that have been created by companies primarily for commercial purposes.

e. Place commercial advertising or links to commercial sites on the district, school, or class web site, except in limited circumstances that would not require that students view the advertisements on links in the context of learning activities.

Recommended Principles for a School Policy on Commercialism on the Internet

- Providing access to a captive audience in the school's technology learning environment, whether accessed in school or from home, for commercial purposes, including specifically online profiling and/or advertising, is "exploitation and a violation of public trust and a violation of the right of students to a free and public education" [NASBE 2000].
- Students should not be permitted to provide personally identifiable information, such as name, address, or other contact information, on the Internet unless the provision of information is by a student over the age of 13 and is for an approved, legitimate educational purpose.
- The collection of anonymous data from students using a web site for the purposes of evaluation and improvement of the educational quality of a web site is considered appropriate and acceptable.
- In any case where a school/teacher desires to use the services of a web site, the school/teacher must make a written request for approval. The request for approval should address the following issues:
- What is the educational purpose of the use of the site?
- How does the use of this site meet an identified educational need?
- What information will be collected directly or indirectly from the student as they use the site? What is the purpose of the collection of information?
- Does the site have any banner ads? If so, what is the relationship of the collection of data to the presence of banner advertising?
- Does anyone else, other than the site, have the ability to collect information directly or indirectly from the student? If so, who and for what purpose?
- Will students' personal information be disseminated to any other party? If so, under what conditions and for what purposes?
- What security provisions have been established to ensure the confidentiality of student's personal information?
- What provisions have been made for the students and/or their parents to review and delete personal information from the company's files?
- Schools should carefully guide the research activities of students to limit student exposure to banner advertising. Students should receive instruction on research strategies that will enable them to find high-quality, educational resources to support their learning.

If teachers are selecting sites for student research, the sites should first be analyzed for the quality, appropriateness, and suitability of the educational materials present on the site. The site should also be reviewed for the presence of banner ads. The following are questions and guidelines for an evaluation of the appropriateness of the advertising on a site:

- How intrusive and distracting are the banner ads visually?
- Are the ads placed in locations where the students should be concentrating on the content of what they are studying?
- Are the ads for youth consumer items or are they public service announcements, educational products or services?
- If students click on the banner ads, is what is presented to them considered appropriate in the educational environment?
- Is advertising the vehicle to support the delivery of high quality educational resource or has the educational resource been established for the purpose of advertising, brand promotion, or corporate promotion?

All involvement with corporations for the provision of technology resources should be evaluated in terms of the following criteria:

- What is the educational quality of the proposed technology resource?
- How will the proposed technology resource assist the school in achieving a stated educational objective?
- How will the school provide for the additional resources or activities, including professional development, necessary to ensure the appropriate and effective use of the proposed technology resource to improve student learning?
- What impacts will the proposed technology resource have on the existing and future technology infrastructure of the district or school?
- What impacts will the proposed technology resource have on the reputation of the district/school regarding the provision of high quality educational services to students? (Willard 2000)

To view the complete text of Willard's recommended "District Policy and District Regulations [on] Collection of Student Information and Online Advertising on the Internet," see Appendix A of "The Internet in School: Expanded Educational Opportunities or a Stealth Portal to the Youth Market," at http://netizen.uoregon.edu/publications.html.

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Ethical Concerns

*[W]e look for E*education to become the stealth portal to over 65 million students and their 50 million parents. (Thomas Weisel Partners 2000)*

[W]e believe that education-related Web sites convey a unique sense of credibility and trust that will likely result in audiences being more receptive to their messages (in the form of content and advertising). Therefore, we expect the e-knowledge companies that build successful online communities to offer a highly desirable advertising medium. (Wit Capital Corporation 1999)

Many critics of school-business partnerships acknowledge the generosity, long-term educational vision, and concern for the well-being of youths that animate true philanthropists in the business community.

Many critics of school-business partnerships acknowledge the generosity, long-term educational vision, and concern for the well-being of youths that animate true philanthropists in the business community. Nancy Willard, director of the Center for Advanced Technology in Education at the University of Oregon, acknowledges the generosity of "enlightened companies" that take "a long-term perspective on the importance of education of our nation's youth and the role that technology can play in this education" (Willard 2000).

Willard and others warn, however, that businesses all too frequently use their access to children merely to peddle products and services and collect personal information for marketing purposes. Molnar (April 1999) writes: "Today, the price of a computer lab, or a school web site, is very often the willingness to provide advertisers access to students and to information about students and their families."

In "The Commercial Transformation of American Public Schools," Molnar (October 1999) observes: "Virtually any industry you can name is taking aim at schools. This is the curriculum as a flea market open to any special interest with money for a booth." Mike Kennedy echoes this view in "Public Schools, Private Profits":

> Whether it's free computers, free televisions, exclusive sales deals with soft-drink companies, educational materials and incentive programs created by private businesses, or businesses who want to operate schools for a profit, private corporations have set their sights on the nation's millions of students as potential customers and schools as the best place to reach them. (Kennedy 2000)

According to Molnar (1998), the proliferation of commercial activity in schools is so widespread that there is reason to view the 1990s as "the decade of sponsored schools and commercialized classrooms." The level of commercial activity in the classroom is likely to rise, as educators are urged to bring technology into the classroom. "These practices seem certain to increase," says Molnar (April 1999), "as the current emphasis on computer technology and utilization of the world wide web encourages the formation of more 'public-private partnerships' to provide computers, software, and web access."

A Range of Criticisms

Critics caution that school-business partnerships are subject to abuse when they become vehicles for the following activities in schools:

Advertise to a captive audience: From TV commercials to banner ads, children are being forced to view advertising in the classroom. "Today, in schools all over America," Molnar (April 1999) writes, "students are routinely required to view advertising in order to complete class assignments or are denied access to learning technologies unless they provide marketers information about themselves and their families."

Concerned educators point out that such practices undermine schools' ability to teach children critical discernment (Boyles) and violate public trust (CACE 1999, NASBE 2000).

Distribute "educational junk mail": From dental-hygiene awareness pamphlets to websites and TV news shows, corporations often distribute "curricular materials" that tend to promote their products and have little educational value. Molnar (October 1999) points out that such materials are introduced into the classroom without the usual screening process:

> Unlike textbooks that are often adopted only after a time-consuming formal review process, corporate sponsored materials often enter the classroom as a form of educational junk mail which an individual teacher uses as she or he sees fit.
>
> Careful professional assessment of the age-appropriateness, relative value, and simple truth contained in these materials is often sacrificed in the name of "school-business partnership."

Online educational materials and activities are the latest incarnation of "an old wolf in new sheep's clothes," according to Willard. She calls the new dot.com model "Edutainvertising—online learning activities masquerading as educational activities, with high en-

tertainment value, created for the purpose of brand promotion" (Willard 2001).

Businesses all too frequently use their access to children merely to peddle products and services and collect personal information for marketing purposes.

Market junk food and soda to students: Critics are raising an outcry over business sponsors that require schools to agree to exclusive vending rights for soft drinks, and to allow ads for fast-food burgers on everything from school buses to book covers and school planners. In "Students for Sale," Steven Manning (1999) begins with one parent's reaction:

> When Susan Crockett walked Amy, her 8-year-old daughter, to her school bus stop last September, she was in for a surprise. The school bus that rolled up was covered with advertisements for Burger King, Wendy's and other brand-name products. A few weeks later, Amy, a third grader, and Crockett's three older children arrived home toting free book covers and school planners covered with ads for Kellogg's Pop-Tarts.... Then, in November, came news that local school officials were pushing a year-old contract giving Coca-Cola exclusive permission to sell its products in district schools. That was the last straw for Crockett.
>
> "It really angers me that the school is actively promoting and pushing a product that's not good for kids," says Crockett, whose oldest child was a senior last year in the Colorado Springs, Colorado, school system.

Under fire from the public, the company that "practically wrote the book" on commercial marketing on campus is now "stepping back its efforts to promote its soda products in schools" (Norris 2001). On March 14, Coca-Cola announced that it will remove its company logo from school vending machines, stock the machines with healthier products, and put less emphasis on exclusive sales contracts with schools. Norris observes:

> The announcement comes at a time when the soft drink industry as a whole is under attack. Recent studies have linked soft drinks to childhood obesity, and critics say Coke's bold statement is really a pre-emptive strike to get ahead of legislation that would severely restrict soft drink sales in schools.

The new products will still be produced by Coke, and Coca Cola is only "asking—but not forcing—local distributors to end exclusive sales contracts with schools" (Norris). Pointing out the money cash-strapped schools stand to lose, Norris predicts that "today's announcement may improve Coca-Cola's corporate image, but do little to change the way its products are sold in schools. "

Incur "hidden costs" to schools: Sponsorship deals that require students to view TV programs with commercials and questionable educational benefits can cost schools and taxpayers more than they realize. Sawicky and Molnar (1998) analyze what they claim is the true cost of Channel One, "a ten-minute news broadcast supplemented by two minutes of commercials" provided mainly to middle-school and high-school students:

> Broadcasting Channel One takes up six or seven days of instruction over the school year.
>
> The twelve minute Channel One program costs American taxpayers $1.8 billion annually.
>
> It costs $300 million a year of the public's money to require students to watch Channel One's two minutes of commercials.
>
> The value of schools' foregone time exceeds the rental value of the equipment Channel One provides by a huge margin. On average, twelve daily minutes of a secondary school's time costs almost $158,000 a year. This cost is far in excess of both the total value of Channel One's equipment ($17,000) and the annual rental value of the equipment ($4,000) in every state.

Critics are raising an outcry over business sponsors that require schools to agree to exclusive vending rights for soft drinks, and to allow ads for fast-food burgers on everything from school buses to book covers and school planners.

Sawicky and Molnar also explain how educators can use their report to calculate what Channel One costs their own schools.

Require students to disclose personal information for marketing purposes, to access "free" technological resources: The U.S. General Accounting Office reports on this "growing" and "highly controversial" phenomenon in schools:

> According to market research literature, some schools have earned thousands of dollars or computer equipment in exchange for allowing companies to conduct market research activities with students, including taste tests, focus groups, and surveys. Market research might be conducted by employees of market research firms or through students' school Internet use. For example, using computers in schools across the nation, children serve on Internet panels and respond to surveys or questions that are presented on-line. Students can also participate in virtual shopping games in which they indicate their preference for items and participate in contests. (Shaul)

Willard criticizes the use of students as commercial research subjects and warns against the "new dot.com business model" in which corporate sponsors bring technology into the classroom while engaging in targeted marketing and online profiling of students. She writes:

> As pressure on schools' budgets and demand for investments in new technologies increase, a new dot.com busi-

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ness model has emerged. This new model involves the offer of "free" technology resources to schools supported by an online advertising program that involves the collection of market-related personal information from students (online profiling) and targeted marketing of students with banner ads—within the educational learning environment.

According to Willard (2000), such invasions of student privacy undermine efforts to teach children how to protect their privacy online:

> It is not possible for schools to teach children about the importance of protecting their personal privacy on the Internet if they are entering partnerships that require students to agree to the collection of personal information as a condition for use of the technology resources.

The concerns critics are raising over corporate involvement in schools are directed less at the businesses that have generously opened their doors to schools than at the marketers who aim to open the doors of schools to businesses.

Molnar (April 1999) questions whether schools should provide demographic information about students even in aggregate form. Even more troublesome than the question of privacy, he believes, is that students are required to provide the information to participate in a school activity.

Willlard (2000) also questions the constitutional legitimacy of requiring students to disclose personal information to companies in order to access the educational resources of their public schools:

> States have a constitutional obligation to provide a free, public education. Increasingly, schools have determined that access to educational and communications resources on the Internet are an important component of the educational preparation of children for the 21st century. In light of [their] constitutional obligations, schools should consider whether it is ethical—or legal—to establish a technology-based learning environment that will require students to consent to the collection of their personal private information by a third-party commercial company as a condition for participation in the program.

Computers and Internet Access

To meet their ethical obligations to students, schools should carefully scrutinize the web-related privacy policies of the companies that provide online resources to their students, and negotiate partnerships that offer students quality educational experiences while preserving their right to privacy (Willard 2000). When using technology in the classroom, educators may wish to take into account the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1999, and the guidelines listed in the sidebar titled "Federal Laws Protecting Student Privacy" on page 6.

Conclusion

The potential for businesses to help schools improve and to expand the learning experiences of students is acknowledged by proponents and critics alike. Business involvement in schools takes many forms. From business people volunteering as mentors in public schools to creating scholarships for aspiring teachers in shortage areas, and from advocating school reform to forming partnerships, members of the business community have volunteered precious time and resources to bring about what many consider to be positive changes in public schools.

The concerns critics are raising over corporate involvement in schools are directed less at the businesses that have generously opened their doors to schools than at the marketers who aim to open the doors of schools to businesses.

Faced with a slew of criticisms, policies, and laws that target commercial activities in schools, some businesses are scrambling to update their in-school marketing strategies "to gain the acceptance of an exceedingly marketing-savvy group" (Phillips Business Information, Inc.).

The bottom line is that marketing surveys only take place in schools because schools need the money. As a recent guide for marketers states, in a section highlighting exclusive contracts between soft-drink companies and public schools: "Schools and companies across the nation have a vested interest in working together. Schools are in constant need of facility and equipment upgrades, while marketers want to be where the kids are" (Phillips Business Information, Inc.).

Willard (2001) asks whether the level of public funding for public education has "reached such a level that educators feel justified in 'selling' commercial access to their students." The answer, in a growing number of cases, seems to be *yes*.

As businesses develop new strategies of "working the appropriate school channels to get inside" (Phillips Business Information, Inc.), schools need very clear district policies that address the legal and ethical complexities of school-business relationships.

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For other resources on business involvement in education, visit the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management website: **http://eric.uoregon.edu**

In addition to the full text of this *Policy Report*, you'll find a set of website links and a *Research Roundup* on "Commercial Activities in Schools."

More information on this topic will be added in the months ahead, including a *Policy Brief* on business involvement in school reform.

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